



## The EC reflection paper on sustainable Europe is a window of opportunity that the EESC is determined to seize

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Statement by

*I welcome the much-awaited reflection paper of the European Commission "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030". I wish to congratulate First Vice-President Timmermans and Vice-President Katainen for this result.*



*Now there is another window of opportunity to further push the sustainable development agenda, which must become the EU's top priority for the next*

*decade.*

*Let us be clear though: this is only the beginning of the road towards an ambitious and successful implementation of the sustainable agenda.*

Since a long time, the EESC and myself have been calling for the adoption of a concrete, ambitious and fair EU SD Strategy. This political paper is only the first step of the process leading to an overarching Strategy that must tackle inequality, solve climate change and allow us to develop new economic patterns.

As the representative of **Europe at work** (employers, trade unions and civil society at large), the EESC is firmly committed to this Agenda for sustainable development. It is the only win-win agenda.

The new business opportunities offered by a sustainable development agenda are the new frontier on which European companies will compete with American and Chinese companies. The battery supply chain, renewable energies or electric cars are all key areas for achieving the economic and energy transition and for allowing Europe not to depend on technology from third countries.

2030 Agenda is also a powerful firewall against social and territorial inequalities; the SDGs call for no poverty and for a decent work for all.

Today's reflection paper provides a window of opportunity. We need to accelerate the transition and seize the momentum to do the right things. Now is the right time.

The Commission paper puts forward suggestions that we welcome, particularly in one of its scenario: "Specific SDG implementation targets should be defined at EU level and an overarching EU SDG Strategy should be implemented by the European institutions", the SDG progress should be monitored, "for instance of the context of the European Semester". Also the "sustainable first" principle to be integrated into the Better Regulation Agenda of the EU and its Member States is an interesting option.

Civil society organisations - to which the Commission's reflection paper very often refer - are committed to keep up the momentum on 2030 Agenda: sustainable development must be a central feature of the upcoming European elections and must be the overarching priority of the next European Commission, which should give it a prominent role to respond to citizens' pressing demand.

The EESC is at fore-front of the circular economy. We called for the setting-up of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) and we have been an active member of it. The MSP's final report, adopted in October 2018, has proved to be an excellent document and an instrumental tool for moving on.

The EESC will adopt a specific opinion on the Commission's document and plans to organise a series of political events in 2019 during which it will further develop its recommendations for the future.

At inter-institutional level, the EESC will strongly cooperate with the European Commission, with the Romanian Presidency, with the European Parliament and with the Committee of the Regions.

We need to make sure that civil society gets properly involved in the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, so that it can really make the difference.

This is why we welcome the Commission's recognition that it could not have completed its reflection paper without the invaluable input of European stakeholders, among whom civil society.

The Agenda must also constitute the basis of a generational pact: our children must have better perspectives than the current generation and must not suffer from the results of our action or inaction today.

Sustainability is part of Europe's DNA. It is about making our economies and societies sustainable and prosperous.

As EESC, we are convinced that the EU budget has to be consistent with the 2030 Agenda and has to provide the means and resources to achieve the SDGs in 2030.

**2019 must be the year of the renewal: a new European Parliament, a new European Commission and a new fresh impetus on the 2030 SD Agenda!**